

19th and 20th Century Composers: A Variety of Repertoire

A Senior Honors Recital (HONR 499)

by

Bryce C. Conway

Thesis Advisor
Dr. Craig Priebe

Signed

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

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Abstract:

My Senior Honors Recital incorporated the vocal music of several 19th and 20th century composers and featured several genres of music as well. The goal of the project was twofold: first, to prepare and perform challenging and interesting repertoire for an audience of family, friends, professors, and community members, and second, to write an artist's statement detailing the process of creating a song recital. In the artist statement that follows, I describe the procedures of selecting the repertoire, researching the repertoire, preparing vocally, creating the program, and reflecting on the final performance.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Priebe: Thank you very much for your contributions to my growth as a musician. I am proud to have you as a mentor and colleague, and I look forward to sharing what skills you gave me with others.

Yoonsung Yeo: You are a wonderful accompanist. I am glad that I had you to provide the kind of emotionally charged accompaniment I desired. Thank you for all the hours you put into practicing for my recital.

My family: I know I can always count on you to be supportive of my art. You were there for me when I was nervous and you were there for me when I was rejoicing. Thank you for the countless nights you checked in on me and provided me with a little piece of home that I needed.

My colleagues in Dr. Priebe's studio: You are like a family to me. Thank you for all the comments and advice you have given over the last four years. I am glad that we were all able to grow together.

Those who attended the recital: Thank you for providing me with a sympathetic and supportive audience. It was wonderful to look out upon your faces and see your reactions to the music I chose. Thank you for coming.

Music is my lifeblood. Most people, if not all, have an interest, a passion, a cause that drives them, motivates them, or energizes them. For me, that something is music. My involvement in music has been very broad. As a fourth-year music education major, I have mainly worked to create musical opportunities with youth in schools and community venues; however, my musical endeavors also include performing, conducting, researching, and even composing. And yet, compared to professionals in the various fields of music, I am but an amateur at this point in my career. Thus, when approached about completing an Honors Thesis, I desired it to incorporate some facet of music in order to expand my experiences and knowledge on the subject. Although I am first and foremost a music educator, I consider myself to be a performer. In fact, what parent would want his or her child learning music from an educator who has plenty of knowledge on the subject but little to no experience in practice? Therefore, I proposed, created, and presented a creative project that I believed was equally educational as well as entertaining: a voice recital. Although a waning art form in comparison to the large ensemble concert or the theatrical production, the song recital offers a more intimate, expressive performance that these larger concerts or that soundbooth recordings cannot provide (Emmons and Sonntag 5-6). In the end, this creative thesis provided me the opportunity to choose repertoire, to do preliminary research on the repertoire, to prepare the repertoire using correct vocal technique, to envision and create a program order, and to perform my diligent work for family, friends, faculty, and community members.

Selecting the Repertoire

As partial fulfillment of my degree in Vocal and General Music Education at Ball State, I completed a total of eight semesters of applied voice lessons, six of which were required and two

for my personal enjoyment. During this time I worked with several members of the voice faculty and attended over sixty voice recitals. What wisdom I have learned from this time regarding one's choice of repertoire can be best summarized by the following quotes from Emmons and Sonntag: "Care must be taken not to tax young singers' technical capabilities" (91), and "[The singer] should sample all performance styles and gain what overall versatility [they] can" (93). That being said, just because a singer's technical abilities should not be strained, they should still be challenged. Thus, when choosing repertoire with Dr. Priebe, my voice teacher and thesis advisor, our goal was to create a program that was equally challenging and achievable as well as extensive in style and range.

In order to balance achievability and challenge, Dr. Priebe and I examined the repertoire I had completed in previous semesters. We discussed pieces that I particularly enjoyed singing as well as pieces that I performed successfully. Once this list was formed, we narrowed it even further by choosing my favorite, best, and/or most memorable piece from each of the four major languages represented in Western music: English, French, German, and Italian. This list included "The Circus Band" by Charles Ives, "Mandoline" by Claude Debussy, "Wohin?" from Franz Schubert's song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*, and "O del mio amato ben" by Stefano Donaudy. From these selections, Dr. Priebe suggested other pieces by the same composer that would offer educational challenges and fill out the set. The result of these suggestions can be seen in **Figure 1** below.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Yoonsung Yeo, piano | | |
| Franz Schubert (1797-1828) | Die schöne Müllerin, D. 795 I. Das Wandern II. Wohin? IX. Des Müllers Blumen XI. Mein! | Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) "Something's Coming" from <i>West Side Story</i> |
| Claude Debussy (1862-1918) | Nuit d'étoiles Beau Soir Mandoline | Stephen Sondheim (b. 1930) "Giants in the Sky" from <i>Into the Woods</i> |
| Charles Ives (1874-1954) | The Side Show The Circus Band | Bryce Conway is a student of Craig Priebe. This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program at Ball State University. |
| Stefano Donaudy (1879-1925) | Tregua non ho O del mio amato ben | |
| Kurt Weill | "Lonely House" from <i>Street Scene</i> | |

School of Music
COMING EVENTS

Tom Shah Memorial Jazz Scholarship Award Concert
Wednesday, February 4, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.
Senior Recital: Jon Nelson, composition
Saturday, February 7, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.
EM | THREE
Monday, February 9, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.
Studio Recital: Students of Meryl Mantione
Tuesday, February 10, Choral Hall, 5:30 p.m.

Figure 1: Recital Program

The addition of "Something's Coming" by Leonard Bernstein and "Giants in the Sky" by Stephen Sondheim - two pieces which I also studied in previous semesters - was at the request of Dr. Priebe in order to extend the styles present in the program. "Lonely House," an aria from the American opera *Street Scene* by Kurt Weill, was added to the program because of my attraction to the piece and to incorporate yet another genre to the recital.

Perhaps of interesting note, there are pieces that were originally chosen by my advisor and me that did not make the final program. In my original thesis proposal, I mentioned the music of Carl Zeller as part of my project. The plan was to sing a duet from *Der Vogelhändler*, one of Zeller's operas, with a friend and colleague of mine. However, I was unable to obtain the music with enough time to effectively learn it due to copyright issues. This was disappointing for many reasons, but from an educational standpoint, I missed an opportunity to collaborate with a

fellow singer and learn from their style and technique. Also missing from **Figure 1** is number X of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*, titled "Tränenregen." If kept, this piece would be sung between "Wohin?" and "Des Müllers Blumen" in the *Die schöne Müllerin* set. Unfortunately, the piece proved to be too challenging to memorize alongside the other pieces I was learning, and with limited time, I decided it was best to remove the piece. An important lesson to learn from the process of choosing repertoire for a song recital is that it is far better to choose too many pieces and cut later than not plan a long enough program. Because Dr. Priebe and I programmed a full recital initially, we had the liberty to withdraw pieces from the final product.

Researching the Repertoire

It is common for music students to complete preliminary research on a piece they are studying. The research may include historical context, the text, the language, the time period, the composer, or interesting facts. Therefore, to prepare for my Senior Honors Recital, I studied the composers and the repertoire that I planned to perform, with an emphasis on interesting facts and emotions present in their works. I will provide portions of this research that I found educational and interesting throughout this section, as well as my own reactions or thoughts based on the fruition of this research.

Franz Schubert, born in Vienna in 1797, is best classified as one of the last of the Classical composers and one of the first of the Romantic composers (Winter 655, 689). His pieces are categorized under four types, or styles characteristic of him: the popular manner, the ambitious style, the learned style, and avant garde (Winter 689). Many of the pieces from *Die schöne Müllerin* fall under the category of the popular manner, meaning they followed the style of music by other composers of the time, such as Mozart (Winter 689).

Around the time that he wrote the song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*, Schubert was in a constant fluctuation of “life-threatening crisis” and good health (Winter 667). For over six years, Schubert moved about from hospitals to home care to normal routine and back to hospitals; however, his productivity as a composer remained at least equal to that of his previous years (Winter 666-667). Wilhelm Müller’s poetry, which Schubert used as the primary text of the *Die schöne Müllerin* song cycle, tells the tale of a young miller who feels optimistic at his chances of wooing another miller’s daughter but soon falls into despair when she rejects his advances and instead chooses the hunter (Winter 667). In the end, the young miller drowns in the very brook he sings to in “Wohin?” (Winter 667). Perhaps Schubert’s desire to set Wilhelm Müller’s poems to music stemmed from what he was experiencing at that point in his life: optimism at his increasing health followed by depression and despair when it again declined. What intrigued me was the prospect of emoting the optimistic qualities of the first half of Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin*. I felt that the audience would relate to selections from his happier Lieder, or songs, from the song cycle.

To create fluidity, I moved next to romantic art songs by Claude Debussy. Often called one of the few successful Impressionist composers, Debussy had a general disdain for that term (Lesure 102). Born on August 22nd, 1862 in France, the composer wrote of striving to do “something different” that in his mind was not anywhere near Impressionist in nature (Lesure 96, 102). Two of the three art songs that I performed, “Nuit d’étoiles” and “Mandoline” were written in 1880 and 1882, respectively (Lesure 114-115). It could be argued that these pieces are more deserving of a Romantic period label due to both the fact that the Romantic period extended well into this time and due to the subject matter involved (Lesure 97). After all, most of Debussy’s

songs at this time were dedicated to his first love, including the songs “Nuit d’étoiles” and “Mandoline” (Lesure 97). Such songs were based on the poetry of famous French poets, such as Théodore de Banville and Paul Verlaine (Lesure 114-115). Regardless of labels, Debussy’s art songs drew me in with their emotionality in both the vocal line and the accompaniment. I found Debussy’s skills as a pianist and Banville and Verlaine’s lyrical poetry lent themselves to an emotionally-heightened experience for me.

I thought it was important to interject humor in my repertoire to showcase a variety; at the suggestion of my advisor Dr. Priebe I chose American composer Charles Ives. Regarded as “the leading American composer of art music of the 20th century,” Ives was born in Connecticut on October 20th, 1874 (Burkholder 685). A person of many talents, Ives’ endeavors included being “the youngest salaried church organist in [New York],” pitching for the Hopkins Grammar School baseball team before admittance into Yale, and working in insurance for over thirty years, in addition to earning accolades as a composer and musician (Burkholder 685-687). Whereas more information exists on his compositions for large ensembles as evidenced by the biographical section on Ives in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, there is little information on “The Side Show” and “The Circus Band” from Ives’ *114 Songs*; however, I found the songs to be quirky and humorous (Burkholder 685-709).

Although I could find little in the way of research on composer Stefano Donaudy, this does not diminish his contribution to art songs. My prior exposure to his music includes only what songs of his I heard from other performers at Ball State. However, I was impressed with the emotion of longing I felt when hearing his music and reading the text.

To expand on the theme of longing but through a different genre, I explored the opera *Street Scene* by American avant-garde composer Kurt Weill (Drew & Robinson, 221). The marriage of two genres, opera and musical theater, which Weill coined “American opera” piqued my interest, particularly because of my dabblings in both genres as a performer (Drew & Robinson 222). Born in 1900, Weill’s career largely took place post World War I, which placed him in the thick of the early musical theater era (Drew & Robinson 220). While Donaudy’s “O del mio amato ben” invoked a longing for lost love, Weill’s aria “Lonely House” from *Street Scene* saw the character Sam lamenting his loneliness despite being surrounded by friends and family.

Continuing in the direction of musical theater, I decided to finish the program with two songs: one from *West Side Story* and the other from *Into the Woods*. I chose these songs, which both deal with anticipation, because I sought to leave my audience with a climactic ending. To research these pieces, I watched stage productions to provide me with background information of the plot and characterization.

Preparing Vocally

Perhaps the most tedious, but certainly the most educationally-rewarding component of the song recital was in fact the vocal preparation process. On average, in semesters prior to the one in which I completed my song recital, I spent an hour a week in voice lessons with Dr. Priebe and about fifteen minutes to an hour a day practicing proper vocal technique, text, notes and rhythms, and expressive elements outside of lessons. This was not the case during the semester prior to and during which my senior honors recital took place. In order to learn a large

amount of new repertoire on top of other voice and choral commitments as well as to build appropriate vocal stamina, my practicing regimen increased to several more hours each week.

The first building block of a successful performance is proper vocal technique. In order to emulate this, Dr. Priebe would rehearse about thirty minutes of vocalises, or warm-ups, at the beginning of every voice lesson. It was my job to take these vocalises and apply them to my own practice everyday. These exercises cover areas such as breathing properly, aligning the body to support singing, phonating, resonating, and many more areas of singing. Oftentimes, the next step involved is singing the notes and rhythms of a piece of repertoire on a neutral syllable or vowel, usually whichever syllable I was most successful with in lessons. This would then translate to singing a song on only the vowels present in the text, a strange practice to those unaccustomed to the art of classical performance. After building up proper technique through this process as deemed by Dr. Priebe, I was allowed to add the text of the song to my practice. Lastly, after much practice and dedication, the memorization process started. The beauty of this process was that if at any point I stumbled transitioning from one building block to the next, I could easily return to the previous block and begin again.

From an educational standpoint, the vocal preparation process teaches young singers many valuable skills and lessons. Emmons and Sonntag describe several skills that can be achieved through proper vocal practice and habits, namely “a well-trained and reasonably beautiful voice,” “advanced musicianship,” “the ability to project and communicate,” “the ability to go beyond what can be taught,” “versatility of styles,” and “good health and the determination to keep it” (21). Though these may seem subjective at times, they are skills that countless singers strive for every day. One skill that I was able to garner throughout the process of preparing for

the song recital was increased vocal stamina. As a young singer with few experiences in vigorous singing under my belt, I had to train my body to become acclimatized to singing for long periods of time with few breaks. For the few weeks leading up to my song recital, I increased my practicing regimen by one song each day. This was strenuous at times, and I was also tempted to sing more than this amount as well, but by the end of the process, I was rewarded.

Though the process is difficult to express in writing, I am able to demonstrate it as both the student and the educator. Thanks to Dr. Priebe's instruction, I can replicate this process in my own voice studio in the future or with my future choir students. It is important for young singers to sing with proper technique, and as a music educator, I endeavor to teach this skill to the next generation of musicians.

Creating the Program

While it may seem somewhat trivial, the order of a song recital can be quite important. Typically, it is in this facet of the song recital that performers create some sort of program theme where each set smoothly segues to the next for the sake of the audience. To make a comparison to music education, a well-thought-out recital program is like a lesson with an effective plan and smooth transitions. Thus, I was charged with making sense of the songs I chose as a whole, and connecting each piece in some way.

Emmons and Sonntag, in their book *The Art of the Song Recital*, describe the structure of the traditional American recital program as follows:

During the first half of the program there would surely be German Lieder and perhaps some French romantic songs. The second half would certainly include something more modern, possibly in a more unusual language, and the recital would probably finish with a group of songs in English, with an emphasis on American composers...such an arrangement automatically provides chronological order and...variety within unity (23).

Interestingly, my ideal program order looked quite similar to what Emmons and Sonntag described before I was even introduced to the traditional American recital program. Reviewing **Figure 1**, my finished program began with four German Lieder from Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*. My justification was that these Lieder were mainly light-hearted and energetic in nature. They also tell a specific story, which would serve to capture my audience's attention. Juxtaposing the energetic pieces with something generally more lyrical and longing, the Debussy pieces came next. After a brief pause, the two Charles Ives pieces took the place of what Emmons and Sonntag call the "more unusual language pieces" (23). The music of Ives, more often composed for large instrumental ensembles, is rarely programmed on vocal song recitals; however, I wanted my audience to enjoy his slightly eerie, pomp-and-circumstance style. Once again contrasting a brighter, lively set with a more somber, emotional one, I inserted the two Donaudy pieces. Finally, the program ended with an emphasis on America's contribution to opera and musical theater in the early to mid-20th century. These three ending pieces were also well known among my family, friends, and members of the community who did not study voice. I placed these pieces at the end to offer familiarity to my audience.

Once again in the style of the traditional American recital program, the full program was arranged in chronological order of composition, with the exception of the Ives and Donaudy pieces. When finished, the informal theme and eventual title of the recital became "19th and 20th Century Composers: A Variety of Repertoire." With the inclusion of German Lieder, French art songs, American songs, Italian art songs, an aria, and musical theater numbers, the second half of the title seemed quite fitting. As for the first half, each composition was written in a timespan of only one hundred and sixty years throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, which is only a small

portion of time in comparison to all of music history. In fact, if “Giants in the Sky” were removed from the program, the time between Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin* and Bernstein’s *West Side Story* is cut down to just over one hundred and thirty years. These factors combined created the title for my creative project.

Reflecting on the Performance

Upon reflection of my process and performance, I feel I achieved most of my goals with my Senior Honors Thesis. For example, the movement of the songs was fluid and chronological. The audience seemed to follow along well, and I received some comments on the juxtaposition and balance of emotions in my program. As for my performance, I received positive remarks from three voice professors, including my advisor Dr. Priebe. Members of the community, some of whom studied music as undergraduate students, seemed delighted with my performance as per their comments to me. In addition, my family and friends were supportive and offered high praise of my abilities to sing and emote. Most importantly, though, I was proud of the performance. There were moments when I was nervous. There were times when I sang the wrong words. There were notes I did not support with the best vocal technique. But that is the beauty of live performance, in my opinion. Making mistakes is a human quality, and by doing so, I learned and grew as a singer and as a performer. Thanks to my research and preparation, I felt I gave each piece its proper feeling on stage. I remember conveying the story of the young miller in the Schubert pieces through my gestures, inflection, and facial expressions. I imagined the various stages of finding and keeping true love while singing the Debussy set. The quirky, humorous Ives songs elicited laughs from the audience. There was a longing for lost love and yearning for an end to loneliness throughout the Donaudy art songs and Weill aria. And finally, I

know I left my audience entertained after the Bernstein and Sondheim repertoire because I remember seeing my family, friends, mentors, colleagues, and community members giving a standing ovation, which is something I will not forget for many years. In short, I accomplished the emotional fluidity and expressive nature I set out to complete through the entire process.

In retrospect, there are parts of the process I will do differently in the future. For my next recital, as Dr. Priebe has told me this could be the very beginning of my soloistic career, I will prepare even further in advance. I believe I started the bulk of my preparation too late in the semester; therefore, I spent more time in December and January in the rehearsal process than I would have hoped. Hiring an accompanist sooner is another part of the song recital I will attempt next time. I am quite grateful and fortunate to have had Yoonsung Yeo play for me on such short notice, as I began the search for an accompanist later than is advised. Also, as I mentioned earlier in the Selecting the Repertoire section, I desire to add a duet or two to future programs. With the addition of these changes, I look forward to what the future holds for me as a music performer and an avid lover of music.

Works Cited

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Bryce Conway

19th and 20th Century Composers: A Variety of Repertoire

As a fourth-year Vocal and General Music Education major, I have been fortunate to experience music in a variety of avenues and opportunities. This includes courses in music history, music theory, vocal performance, choral and instrumental conducting, and musical experiences with churches, Muncie citizens, and choirs from other states. However, these courses and experiences take more than four years of education to master; and therefore, my understanding of these topics is more broad than it is mastered. The opportunity to choose my own senior thesis topic allows me to choose an area of music that I enjoy and delve deeper into the topic. Therefore, for my senior honors thesis, I desire to give a vocal recital including repertoire from composers whom I find intriguing and to write a follow-up report on the composers and their compositions that I will perform in the recital. The purpose of this creative project is two-fold. First, I want to show my peers, professors, family, and friends the hard work that I have done in preparation to be a vocalist. Second, I want to research composers that I find interesting to better understand why they wrote their compositions the way they did and what context they wrote these pieces in. Thus, the final result of the project will be a senior recital, which will be audio and video recorded for future use, and a research paper on 19th and 20th century composers and their pieces from my program: Franz Schubert, Claude Debussy, Carl Zeller, Stefano Donaudy, Charles Ives, Kurt Weill, Leonard Bernstein, and Stephen Sondheim.

This project is quite important to me in several ways. As a future vocal music educator, it is important that I am able to vocally model for my students. There is a certain sentiment among some musicians that music educators do not need to be proficient at their instrument. I find this to be entirely false. Singers and players must be successful at their own instruments if they are

going to gain the respect of their students and if they are going to teach them effectively. My recital will show off the hard work that I have put into being a musician. The recording will also be useful to use in my future classrooms to show my students what it is like to perform for others and could even be used as an exercise in evaluating music performances, which incorporates National Standard 7 of Music Education. As for the research portion of my proposed thesis, being knowledgeable about music history and incorporating it into the classroom is another part of the 9 National Standards for Music Education (Standards 8 and 9). The information that I gather will be valuable to use in my future classrooms when discussing pieces written by the composers that I previously mentioned and also the historical eras during which they lived. In essence, not only will my recital and paper be of use to me currently, but also I can find ways with which to use them in my career.

This project is intended for me, my music friends and faculty members, my family, and my future students. Additionally, my target audience includes those who appreciate music and music performances, be that Muncie citizens, Ball State students, and other faculty members. My hope is that the audience will be comprised of people who support me, and I will showcase the skills I have developed thanks to their support. I expect my audience to have an enjoyable evening, appreciating the various composers and their repertoire that I will perform. One of the main reason music is important is simply for its aesthetic contributions to the world. Therefore, I expect my audience to be aesthetically moved by my performance. For those who read my research report, I am confident they will learn a brief overview of Schubert, Debussy, Zeller, Donaudy, etc. and the history surrounding the repertoire of theirs that I have selected. My goal is that by reading the paper portion, people will remember a few key interesting facts about a plethora of 19th and 20th century of composers. Finally, with both the recital and the paper, I

expect my audience to appreciate the hard work that has culminated throughout my Ball State music career.



School of Music

Senior Honors Recital

Tuesday, February 3, 2015
Sursa Hall, 5:30 p.m.

BRYCE CONWAY, tenor
with
Yoonsung Yeo, piano

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Die schöne Müllerin, D. 795

I. Das Wandern

II. Wohin?

IX. Des Müllers Blumen

XI. Mein!

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Nuit d'étoiles
Beau Soir
Mandoline

Charles Ives
(1874-1954)

The Side Show
The Circus Band

Stefano Donaudy
(1879-1925)

Tregua non ho
O del mio amato ben

Kurt Weill
(1900-1950)

"Lonely House" from *Street Scene*

Leonard Bernstein
(1918-1990)

"Something's Coming" from *West Side Story*

Stephen Sondheim
(b. 1930)

"Giants in the Sky" from *Into the Woods*

Bryce Conway is a student of Craig Priebe.
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for the Honors Program at Ball State University.

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School of Music  
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**Senior Recital: Jon Nelson, composition**

Saturday, February 7, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

**EM | THREE**

Monday, February 9, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

**Studio Recital: Students of Meryl Mantione**

Tuesday, February 10, Choral Hall, 5:30 p.m.

**Arts Alive Concert Series: New York Voices**

Tuesday, February 10, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

**Junior Recital: Robert Rouch, organ**

Wednesday, February 11, Sursa Hall, 5:30 p.m.

**Band Conducting Workshop**

Saturday, February 14-15, Music Instruction Building, 9:00 a.m.

**Wind Ensemble and Symphony Band**

Saturday, February 14, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

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